

Gun Cleaning and Maintenance – Proper Procedure

- By Joe Aiello / October 10, 2012

In my last article (“Gun Cleaning and Maintenance – What You Need”), we went through the tools that will be necessary for you to perform regular maintenance, cleaning and inspection of your firearms. Hopefully by now, you have obtained the tools and are familiar enough with your firearm to do basic disassembly.

The procedures that I list here are my own. I’ve refined the process after many years of shooting and owning different types of firearms. Personally, I’ve found these procedures to be the most effective for me, which is why I’m sharing them with you. However, there are very few absolutes when it comes to cleaning and you may adopt your own style and procedures. That is great, as I never will claim to be the “be-all-end-all” of everything firearms. However, there are some pitfalls you need to watch out for and I will summarize these at the end of the article.

Gun Cleaning Procedure – Rifles/Shotguns

- 1) Verify that all ammunition has been removed from the gun and that it is unloaded. A good practice is to remove all ammunition from the area (or from the room) that you are working in.
- 2) Field-strip the gun. For a bolt-action rifle this means removing the bolt.
- 3) Set the gun in a cleaning rest.
- 4) Inset the cleaning bore guide.
- 5) Attach a patch jag/patch puller to the cleaning rod.
- 6) Run 1 dry patch, followed by 2 solvent-soaked patches through the bore. Run the patches only through once from the breech to the muzzle. With certain types of rifles, you have no choice but to do it from the muzzle end. Be VERY CAREFUL not to scratch or nick the muzzle crown. Let it soak as you perform the next steps.
- 7) Using a parts brush (or a toothbrush), wet brush with solvent and thoroughly scrub the disassembled parts. Clean with a rag.
- 8) Visually inspect the disassembled parts and verify their condition.
- 9) Using lubricant, smear a thin layer over and around the disassembled parts. Put one drop of oil on the moving parts. Set parts aside.
- 10) Attach a bore brush to your cleaning rod. Put a few drops of solvent on the brush.

- 11) Run the bore brush through the barrel back and forth 10 times. Do NOT reverse the direction while the brush is still in the bore. This can cause the brush to bend and will damage the brush and even cause it to get stuck in the bore.
- 12) Replace the brush with the jag/patch puller and run one solvent-soaked patch through the bore.
- 13) Run dry patches through the bore until clean.
- 14) Remove the bore guide and scrub the inside of the receiver/breech with the parts brush/toothbrush.
- 15) Use a rag to wipe up the solvent and debris.
- 16) Use your finger or a Q-Tip to put a layer of lubricant inside of the receiver. Place one drop of lubricant on the action parts.
- 17) Reassemble the gun and work the action back a forth a few times to distribute the lubricant and ensure proper operation.
- 18) Use a rag and a few drops of lubricant to wipe down all external metal parts of the gun.

Gun Cleaning Procedure – Pistols/Revolvers

- 1) Verify that all ammunition has been removed from the gun and that it is unloaded. A good practice is to remove all ammunition from the area (or from the room) that you are working in.
- 2) Field-strip the gun. For a revolver, this means simply opening the cylinder.
- 3) Remove the grips (if your model has removable grips). This keeps the grips from getting damaged by the solvent and allows you to clean the frame under the grips where dirt and moisture accumulates and can cause rust.
- 4) Attach a patch jag/patch puller to the cleaning rod.
- 5) Run 1 dry patch, followed by 2 solvent-soaked patches through the bore. With Pistols, run the patches only through once from the breech to the muzzle. With Revolvers, you have no choice but to do it from the muzzle end. Be VERY CAREFUL not to scratch or nick the muzzle crown. Let it soak as you perform the next steps.
- 6) Using a parts brush (or a toothbrush), wet brush with solvent and thoroughly scrub the disassembled parts. Clean with a rag. For Revolvers, run 1 dry patch, followed by 2 solvent-soaked patches through each of the cylinder chambers from back to front.
- 7) Scrub the inside of the receiver/breech with the parts brush/toothbrush.
- 8) Use a rag to wipe up the solvent and debris.

- 9) Visually inspect the disassembled parts and verify their condition.
- 10) Using lubricant, smear a thin layer over and around the disassembled parts. Put one drop of oil on the moving parts. Set parts aside.
- 11) Attach a bore brush to your cleaning rod. Put a few drops of solvent on the brush.
- 12) Run the bore brush through the barrel back and forth 10 times. Do NOT reverse the direction while the brush is still in the bore. This can cause the brush to bend and will damage the brush and even cause it to get stuck in the bore. For revolvers, do the same thing for each of the cylinder chambers.
- 13) Replace the brush with the jag/patch puller and run 2 solvent-soaked patches through the bore. For revolvers, run 2 solvent soaked patches through each of the cylinder chambers.
- 14) Run dry patches through the bore until clean. For revolvers, do the same on each of the cylinder chambers.
- 15) Use your finger or a Q-Tip to put a layer of lubricant inside of the receiver. Place one drop of lubricant on the action parts. If your gun has an exposed hammer, cock the hammer and put one drop of lubricant where the hammer meets the frame.
- 16) Reassemble the gun and work the action back and forth a few times to distribute the lubricant and ensure proper operation.
- 17) Use a rag and a few drops of lubricant to wipe down all external metal parts of the gun.

Important Notes and Considerations:

There are some things that you should be aware of when following this guide or if you choose to develop your own procedure. These are the few points that must be followed regardless of your personal style or process:

- 1) Always unload the gun elsewhere and bring the unloaded gun, with the action open, to your work area. I can't stress the importance of this enough. Aside from being the absolute safest way to clean a gun, you should never keep your ammo anywhere near your cleaning supplies. Solvents and lubricants can damage ammunition. Oils and solvents can penetrate primers and powder charges, rendering the cartridge useless. Additionally, remember that solvents are designed to break down copper, lead and even brass that accumulates in the bore, chamber and action. Well, these are the exact things that make up a cartridge...so, you want to keep your ammo as far from them as possible.
- 2) When using a separate solvent and lubricant, always remember that solvent is used first and lubricant is used last. In my previous article, I referred to solvent as the soap/shampoo and lubricant as the lotion/conditioner. Keep that in mind and you won't make a mistake.

3) Whenever possible, always clean from the breech (back) to the muzzle (front). This keeps all the solvent, dirt and grime from being pushed into the action. Also, this helps to protect the muzzle crown from damage. The muzzle crown is one of (if not the most) delicate parts of your gun and even a tiny nick will cause a major loss in accuracy and can only be repaired by a gunsmith who will have to recut the crown. If your particular firearm will not allow you to use a rod from the breech, then you can either use it from the muzzle end VERY CAREFULLY, or you can opt to use a soft, flexible option like a Bore Snake that you can thread into the chamber and pull out of the muzzle.

4) Solvents come in many forms, but the two most common are “general solvent” and “bore cleaner”. General solvents (like Hoppe’s #9) tend to be much more mild and can be safely used on all parts of your firearm inside and out. Bore cleaners (Like Shooters Choice Bore Cleaner) tend to be very aggressive and should ONLY be used in the bore and never on the other parts. In a pinch, you can use oil as a cleaner if you don’t have a mild solvent.

5) Bore Brushes will wear out after some use and will have to be replaced periodically. The same holds true for parts brushes...though they do tend to last much longer. Always remember to ONLY use bronze or nylon bore brushes and only nylon parts brushes.

6) When you are done cleaning, make sure that you ALWAYS thoroughly rinse off all your tools with clean water. Putting anything away covered with oils and solvents will destroy them in short order.

7) When you have finished and secured your firearm, put your kit away and cleaned up your work area, remember to thoroughly clean your hands. First, wash your hands with soap and cold water. This will keep your pores closed and keep the contaminants from leeching into your skin.

This concludes our two-part series on gun cleaning and maintenance. Remember that a clean and well-maintained gun will be more reliable, more accurate, last longer and will allow you to inspect the parts and address little problems before they become big problems.

I hope this article has been informative and helpful to you. To stay up to date on the latest class schedule, new articles, store specials and news, follow us on Twitter: **@NYGunTraining**.

Stay Safe!

-Joe